

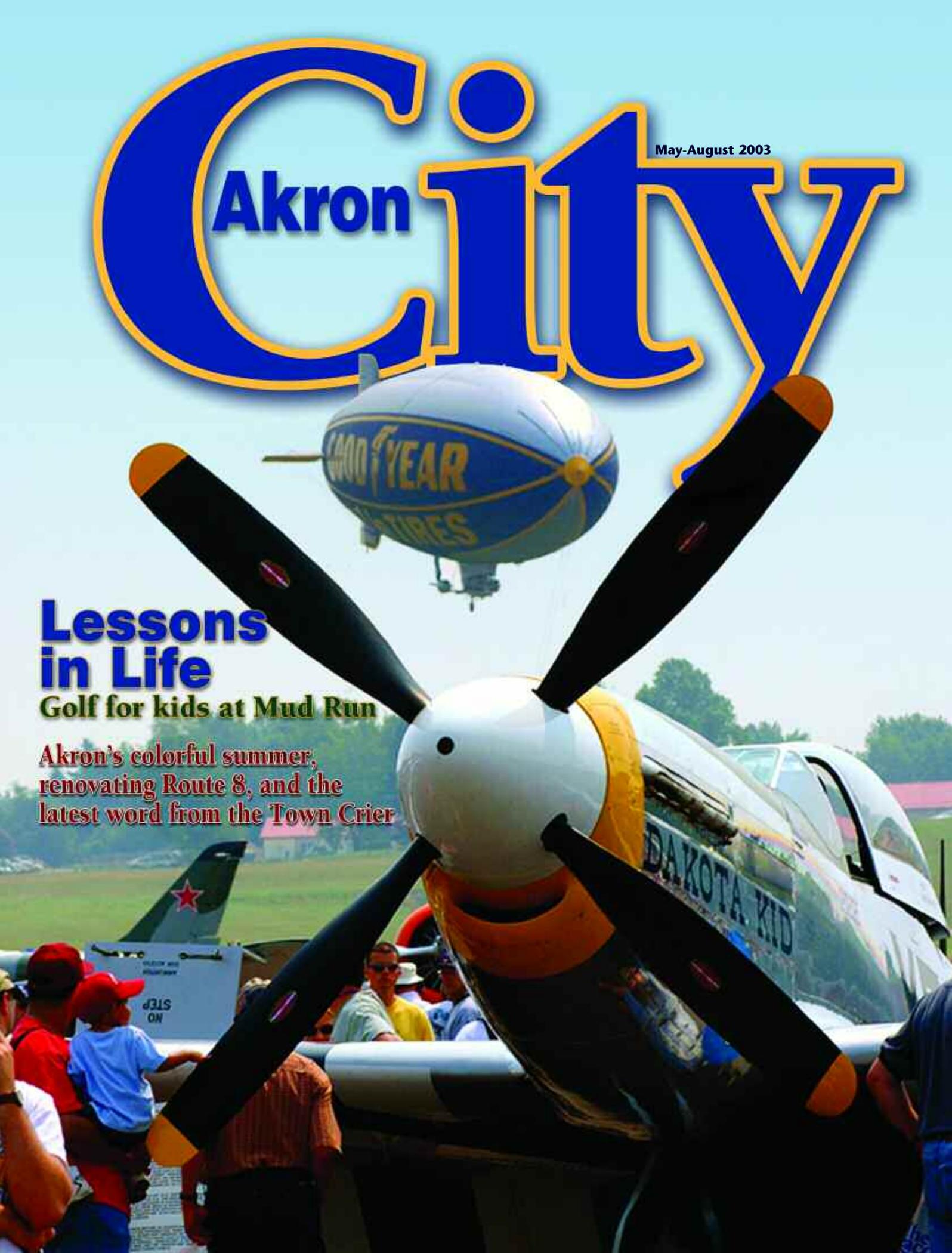
Akron City

May-August 2003

Lessons in Life

Golf for kids at Mud Run

Akron's colorful summer,
renovating Route 8, and the
latest word from the Town Crier



From City Hall...

Is it spring yet?

As I prepare this column from my office on the second floor of City Hall, the sun is shining, and there's a light covering of snow on the statue of Charles Goodyear across the street. It's been a cold winter – very snowy and very expensive.

Akron will hit the \$5 million mark in the cost of snow and ice removal this year. Our budget was \$2 million this winter. We've used 45,000 tons of road salt. That's more than the whole City of Cleveland used. That's more than the four counties of the Ohio Department of Transportation used! Why? Because we provide more service. We take care of our interstate highways as well as all city streets.

Public Works Manager Paul Barnett tells me that our crews were on the streets more than 100 of the 120 days between the first of November and the end of February – including every single weekend and every single holiday.

I'm very proud of our snow and ice removal crews. They're easy to spot in those big orange trucks. They're tough, they're determined and, boy, are they tired! When



you see one of them, say thanks.

I'm pleased with the response we've received from our first issue of *Akron City* magazine. One senior gentleman called to say, "Keep up the good work – the magazine

makes a big city seem like a little community."

Patty from Akron dropped me an e-mail. "If no one makes any changes in this area for the next 20 years," she wrote, "you should still have enough material to put in the magazine three times a year."

The favorable comments that the magazine has received have been balanced by your concerns about our calendar. Typical was this note from Karen: "Sending out a four-month calendar is one of the most ridiculous things I've ever heard of!"

I got the message, Karen, and I admit we made a mistake. The idea was to be able to update the calendar every four months, so as to provide better information. But instead, we should have done a 12-month calendar and used the new *City* magazine to update the events. We'll fix it next year, for sure.

(I also may have made one or two other mistakes this year, but I'm going to save those for my retirement speech down the road!)

As I look out my window, there is one other thing I see: It's the small "Blue Star" flag that Laura Dunlop of the Wendell Willkie American Legion post presented me with last September 11. It's been hanging in my window since that day, and it serves as a constant reminder of Akron men and women who have been called overseas to serve their country in uniform.

There's not a day that I don't think of this group of courageous Akronites, and I encourage you to keep them in your thoughts and prayers. We all need to do what we can to support the families they've left behind.

I hope to see you at some of the wonderful activities that we have planned this summer. They're listed in our calendar.

Donald L. Plusquellic



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Akron City

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Our Cover Photo . . .

. . . is **Bruce Ford's** view of the *Defenders of Freedom* Air Show, Akron's first in 14 years. More than 50,000 people converged on East Akron to see military, vintage and civilian aircraft last June. This year, the MAPS Air Museum is assembling an array of vintage and modern military aircraft, aerial display teams, and some of America's top guns for *Aero Expo 2003: A Century of Flight*. This year's air show will be held at Fulton Airport, June 20-22, beginning with a Friday night preview. For more information, call 330-896-6332.

Tell us what you think by replying to editor@ci.akron.oh.us

Or share your thoughts with the mayor at mayor@ci.akron.oh.us

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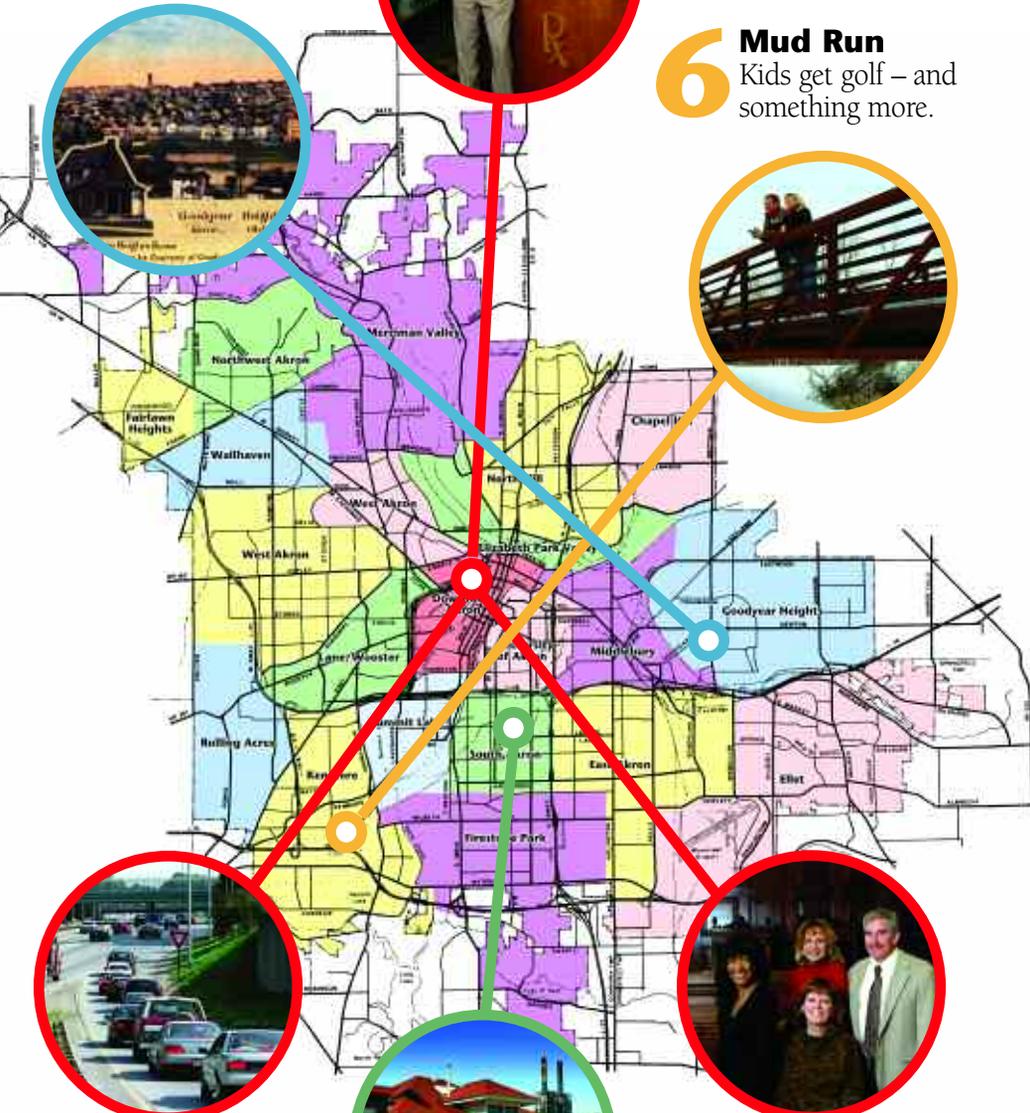
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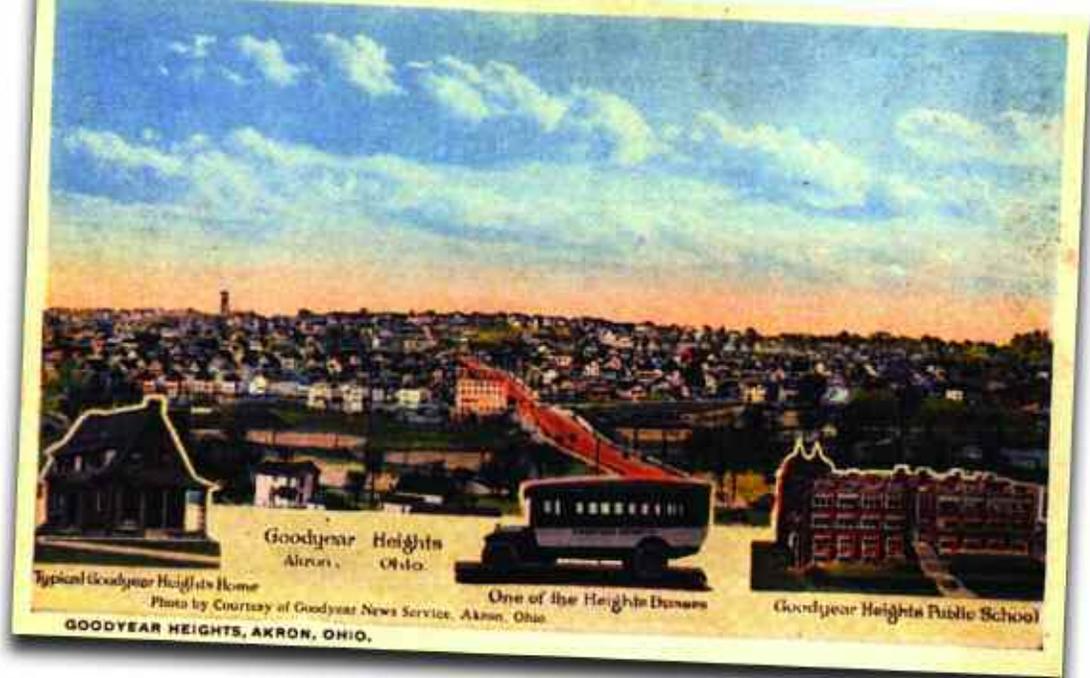


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Neighborhoods



A promotional card for Goodyear touted the new neighborhood. Courtesy, Ruth Clinefelter

Goodyear Heights

Seiberling's Neighborhood Gets a Face-lift

It's Sunday morning. The American flag flies outside Julian's Café; inside, the restaurant is crowded with diners, their cars parked at an angle along Pioneer Street. Here's one more place in Akron where you feel the land beneath you, as you drive along one of Akron's remaining brick streets, which hug the contours of the land below.

If you climb the hill on Honodle Avenue to the back of Seiberling School, you get one of the best views of Akron's skyline, dominated by the Goodyear clock tower in the foreground and the University of Akron's College of Polymer Science behind.

Did Frank Seiberling have this view in mind in 1912, when he purchased the large tracts of land adjoining Blue Pond and the hills around it? Goodyear Heights was Seiberling's answer to the worst housing crisis in Akron's history. Factory workers were living in converted basements, attics and even chicken coops before the Goodyear founder designed this modern industrial neighborhood.

Eighty years later, the city's response to the aging neighborhood is the Seiberling Neighborhood Area Renewal Plan, adopted by City Council last October and now being implemented by the Department of Planning.

"Electrical systems in many homes are outdated, plumbing is often insufficient and, in some cases, foundations are cracked and in need of repair," says Ralph Coletta, manager

The city is acquiring parcels of land along Honodle for a new development of 20 brand-new houses, to be built on a redesigned street that will end in a cul-de-sac.

of Development Services for the City of Akron.

"Ninety percent of the homes in this area are single-family homes," says Coletta, "and, while well more than half are owner-occupied, the ages of the homes alone compel us to offer rehabilitation."

The pie-shaped district – bounded roughly by Newton Street, Eastland Avenue and Brittain Road – will receive increased attention from city housing inspectors. Many homeowners will be eligible for low-interest loans and grants to help with home repairs. The city will upgrade streets, curbs, side-

walks, lighting and utilities, and new trees will be planted.

"Only the most deteriorated housing will actually be removed," says Coletta. The city is acquiring parcels of land along Honodle for a new development of 20 brand-new houses, to be built on a redesigned street that will end in a cul-de-sac. Residents whose homes are to be acquired will receive relocation assistance. The new homes will be constructed at market rates, in a cooperative arrangement with the Homebuilders Association of Greater Akron.

"This can be difficult for some residents," acknowledges Mayor Don Plusquellic, "but as we have discovered in other areas, when we rehabilitate older homes and help build new houses, it is well worth the effort and the cost."

This year, under a similar program, the City is completing 24 new homes on Bisson Street in the Lane-Wooster neighborhood and has sold nine new homes on Coburn Street in South Akron, in the City's first joint housing venture with area homebuilders.

"I'm excited about working with neighbors this year," says Ward 10 Councilman Gary Moneypenney. "The effect of this development plan will be to increase the housing values of every resident who participates. This will become a desirable area for new homeowners to consider." 

Business Is Healthy at Highland Square Pharmacy



Like the Highland Square community he serves, pharmacist Rod Kalbus is resilient. Despite increasing competition from national drugstore chains, Kalbus' small, independent pharmacy has retained a steadfast following.

Kalbus is only the third owner of Highland Square Pharmacy, which has been in existence since 1956 and is one of the few remaining independent pharmacies in the Akron area. Nearly everything about the store is a throwback, from the bare fluorescent lighting to the display of old-style apothecary bottles to the personalized advice the pharmacist dispenses.

"Because I'm here all the time, I know most of my customers by name," says Kalbus, who has owned the store since 1991. "I'm familiar with their particular needs, so I can help them understand the medications that they are taking."

Located in a business strip on West Market Street, Kalbus' store covers only a couple thousand square feet and has limited hours and few products other than pharmaceuticals. "Being small is an advantage," he says. "I have less overhead, and I can spend

more time talking to customers. I can offer them a better level of personal service than they can get at the large drugstore chains."

A benefit of being independent, says Kalbus, is that he can generally offer favorable pricing on pharmaceuticals. "A lot of chain drugstores base the price of a generic drug as a fixed percentage of the comparable name-brand drug," he explains.

"Being small is an advantage," he says. "I have less overhead, and I can spend more time talking to customers."

"Oftentimes, I can underprice the chain stores, because I don't base my generic prices on fixed percentages. In other words, I have less markup on my generics."

While value is always attractive to consumers, Kalbus says it's attentive service that inspires loyalty in customers. "I've got customers who have been coming to this store for

more than 20 years."

Independent stores are often targeted for acquisition by major chains, but Kalbus says he is committed to remaining in Highland Square. He enjoys the neighborhood's eclectic population, he says. "We have an interesting mix of residents, ranging from seniors who live in subsidized housing to young professionals." 



Francesca Perfetto enjoying a serving of her family's homemade gnocchi and meatballs.

Casa Mimi: A Kenmore Tradition *By Robert Sberna*

In recent years, the Kenmore neighborhood has become known for its mix of new arrivals and longtime residents – many of them fourth-generation homeowners. Whether new or old, the 19,000 or so residents of Kenmore share a strong sense of pride in their community and its many longstanding business establishments.

At Casa Mimi Restaurant on Manchester Road, owner/chef Giuseppe Perfetto has been preparing homemade Italian meals since 1967.

Charlotte Perfetto, who is Giuseppe's wife and Casa Mimi's hostess, says that many of her customers have been patronizing the restaurant since it first opened. "Not only do we have longtime regulars," she notes, "but we're also serving their children and grandchildren." The Perfettos' children, Lia, Tony and Francesca, also work at the restaurant.

On a recent Thursday, Bill Thomas was enjoying Giuseppe's angel hair pasta with marinara sauce. "The best sauce I've ever had," says Thomas, who works at nearby Jeter Systems. His father (also a Jeter Systems employee) introduced him to Casa Mimi in the 1980s. "I usually try to eat here a couple of times a month," Thomas says. "The food is consistently delicious."

The key to consistency is using fresh ingredients, says Giuseppe, who was born near Naples, Italy. "We compete by providing quality food and service," he explains. "It costs a little more to serve the best ingredients, but it's worth it."

Giuseppe and Charlotte plan to upgrade the restaurant's exterior and have no desire to move the restaurant out of Kenmore. "There's a nice blend of people here," says Charlotte, a Kenmore native. "It hasn't changed much since I was a child. A lot of the same people are still here; they're just older." 

**Youngsters Will Get Lessons
in Golf – and Life – at**

Mud Run

By Robert Sberna



Akron City golf course worker Dwight VanVorst (left) worked with Engineering Bureau construction manager Jim Weber (right) in creating Mud Run's superb playing surface.

This summer, with the opening of the new Mud Run Golf Facility, Akron children will have the opportunity to learn to play golf while gaining knowledge about life skills.

The nine-hole Mud Run golf course was developed by the City of Akron, with support from the First Tee of Akron Inc., which is part of a national effort to provide affordable golf access for young people who otherwise might not have an opportunity to play.

Located in the Kenmore neighborhood, the new facility includes a 13-acre driving range, a practice putting green and a 4,100-square-foot clubhouse with classroom space. Although the City-owned golf course will be open to the public, the First Tee participants will have priority use of the facility during the summer months. City officials expect to open the practice range in May and the course a month later.

While Mud Run is primarily intended for youngsters, golfers of all ages and skill levels will find that the course layout can be challenging, says Jim Weber, construction division manager in the City's Bureau of Engineering. "This is not a 'pitch-and-putt' golf course," says Weber, who coordinated

the work of Mud Run's architects and various contractors. "This is a high-quality course with a top-of-the-line irrigation system, excellent greens and great bunker sand."

Because the course has four sets of tees, says Weber, players of various abilities can play from different tees and get a completely different perspective on the course. "There's something for everyone out here," he says. "Beginning golfers can play from the front tees, while their parents play from the back tees."

The Mud Run site occupies 100 acres, with 60 acres dedicated to the course and practice range. The remaining acreage will be preserved as wetlands. "We moved a lot of earth to contour the course and ensure

good drainage," Weber says, adding that Mud Run's rolling terrain resembles golf courses in the Carolinas. "When you're playing this course, you won't even realize that you're in the middle of Akron."

The idea for Mud Run golf course (which was named for a stream that flowed through the area) dates back to the late 1990s, when the City launched its "Hook a Kid on Golf" program. John Conti, who serves as Akron City Councilman-at-Large, explains that the junior golf program was very popular. But, he notes, the program's coordinators did not have access to a golf facility large enough to accommodate all the participants.

"It has been apparent for some time that we needed a place for the kids to play,"



Jody Richards spent the last year making sure that Mud Run will be one of northeast Ohio's top-notch golf facilities.

attorney Tom Knoll and several partners were establishing a local chapter of First Tee. Knoll, who is chairman of Firestone Country Club, explains, "We felt that this program did a great job of integrating life skills and the values of golf."

First Tee was created in 1997 by the World Golf Federation, which consists of the Professional Golf Association, the Ladies Professional Golf Association, the United States Golf Association and the Augusta National Golf Club.

Knoll says the decision to establish a First Tee chapter in Akron had much to do with the City's long relationship with the PGA. "We have a great tradition of professional golf in this area, dating back to the Rubber City Open and the World Series of Golf."

Since then, more than 100 First Tee chapters have been founded throughout the country. Nationally, the organization plans to introduce the game to 500,000 children by 2005. First Tee targets minority children and others who may not have ready access to golf facilities.

Along with providing golf instruction at a nominal cost, the First Tee organizations use the principles of golf to teach kids the core values of life. "Golf is a game of integrity, etiquette, sportsmanship and perseverance," says Vincent King, executive director of First Tee of Akron. "What the children learn on the golf course will follow them throughout their lives."

King emphasizes that the First Tee program is not intended to "create another Tiger Woods." Instead, he and his staff (which is mostly volunteer) are using golf as a means to mentor children. "If we find another Tiger or Nancy Lopez or Chi Chi Rodriguez, that's great," he says. "But we're more interested in creating a Colin Powell or Martin Luther King. We want to help these kids develop the life skills that will help them through high school and college."

Like J.E. Good Park, Akron's other City-

owned golf course, Mud Run will be open year-round. Noting that Mud Run has 16 heated and covered practice tees, Weber says he expects the course to have steady business, even during winter months.

Weber, an 18-year City employee, typically works on projects involving roadways, parking decks or wastewater plants. Building a golf course was a "learning experience," he says, adding that Jody Richards, a resident project representative in the City's construction division, spent a year on the Mud Run site. "What made the job successful was the communication and cooperation between the architects, contractors and City personnel," he notes.

The course architect was Craig Schreiner, an Akron native who is now based in Kansas City. Environmental Design Group of Akron was the project coordinator, and Northern Valley Contractors, also of Akron, was the general contractor. The clubhouse architect was Michael DiMaio & Associates of Fairlawn. Summit Construction was responsible for erecting the clubhouse.

Weber says many of the project's vendors and contractors donated materials and services, including Schreiner, Northern Valley, Davey Tree, Eslich Wrecking, Burkhart Metals, P.S. Fabrics and H.R. Gray.

The First Tee of Akron will present a free golf clinic for Akron children on April 21 through 25. For information about the clinic or the First Tee organization, call 330-784-5400. 

says Conti. "We knew that the vacant land was available in Kenmore. I thought that it would be a great spot for a nine-hole course. By using the land for recreation, we could also preserve the habitat for wildlife and maybe even enhance the area."

Conti says he learned in 1998 that Kevin Harris of the Akron Jaycees – the organization that coordinated the City's junior golf program – was searching for property on which to construct a youth-oriented golf course. "He was looking for land, and I knew about a potential site, so it was a good marriage," Conti says.

During the time that Conti and Harris were discussing the prospects of using the Kenmore property for a golf course, Akron



Mud Run Opening Ceremonies:

Wednesday, June 18, 10:30 am.
First Tee Dedication: In August, during the NEC championship, featuring guests from the PGA.

This is A



Springtime means the return of AA baseball to Canal Park and the return of women's softball to Firestone Stadium – one of the finest venues for the game in the U.S. Area high-school teams and the University of Akron will bring their games to South Akron. In 2004, the city will see the return – after a two-year absence – of Women's Professional Fastpitch Softball. The new National Pro Fastpitch League has the support of major-league baseball.



The Akron City Council family grew by two recently, as 7th Ward Councilwoman Mary Ellen McAvoy (left) welcomed Aidan Clark McAvoy Sivak last July 1, and 10th Ward Councilwoman Dr. Terry Albanese gave birth to Anthony Michael Albanese on February 24.

AKRON

Photos by Bruce Ford



Summer in Akron will be filled with city-sponsored activities for young and old alike. In 2003, noontime concerts will move from Cascade Plaza to the new Lock 3 park on South Main. Akron's Recreation Bureau has an ambitious schedule of activities for kids at all of the city's recreation sites.



KEEP  AKRON
BEAUTIFUL



Mayor Plusquellic (left) hosted a meeting of the mayors of Ohio's big cities at the John S. Knight Center in January. Mayors Jack Ford of Toledo, Jane Campbell of Cleveland, Rhine McLin of Dayton, Michael Coleman of Columbus and Charlie Luken of Cincinnati (left to right) made a mutual-aid pact, agreeing to assist each other in the event that any city experiences a major disaster.



News

**From Flowers to Art,
Akron will burst with**

Color This Summer

By Robert Sberna



If City employees Bill Hahn and Suzie Graham have their way this summer, sections of Akron's expressways will be spruced up with roadside blossoms, and Lock 3 Park will be abloom with budding artists.

Graham is coordinator of the Lock 3 Summer Arts Experience, a new City-sponsored program that will pair professional artists with young people interested in an arts career. The program is a collaborative effort between the City's Bureau of Recreation and various community organizations that will provide arts instruction and mentoring to the 60 or so students.

City arborist and horticulturist Hahn serves as point person for Akron's Expressway Landscaping Plan. Launched in 1996, the long-term beautification project has resulted in the planting of thousands of flowers, shrubs and trees along the south leg of Interstate 77 and other stretches of expressway inside the city.

Graham explains that the Lock 3 Summer Arts Experience is geared to Akron residents ages 14 through 18. During the four weeks of the program, students will receive a concentrated education in their particular field of interest. "Students will also gain some practical training in finding and keeping a job," she notes.

At present, program mentors include the Akron Art Museum, which will provide training in visual arts; the Magical Theatre Company, which will offer sessions in stagecraft, costuming, set design and acting; and M.P. Productions, a video production firm that will provide classes in filmmaking and video. In addition, the Keep Akron Beautiful organization will partner with



Bill Hahn

R.G. Thomas Landscape & Design to offer students training in landscape design and horticulture.

To be considered for the program, says Graham, students will need to submit samples of their work in visual or performing arts to a selection panel. Each applicant will also be interviewed.



Suzie Graham

"We're not necessarily looking to attract the most academically inclined students," Graham says. "We're looking for artistically inclined students, whose talents we can nurture. My goal is to have students emerge from this program with a résumé, art portfolio and a strong mentoring relationship with a professional artist."

Those professional artists will receive compensation, and student participants will have an opportunity for financial rewards as well. Along with receiving art instruction and mentoring, students will be trained in work-readiness skills. Each student who successfully completes the program's requirements will have \$400 deposited into an account opened at the beginning of the course.

Graham is also founder and coordinator of the City's Ingenu Theatre Ensemble, which provides opportunities for young people to participate in acting, stage crew

and various aspects of theater. "I have a great job, because I'm able to directly influence these kids," says Graham, who holds a bachelor's degree in theater from Kent State University. "It's rewarding to be able to help improve the quality of someone's life."

The Summer Arts Experience program will be conducted Mondays through Thursdays, June 30 to July 25, at the O'Neil Commons and Lock 3 Park. For further information, call 330-375-2853.

While art enthusiasts can visit Lock 3 to observe the work of young artists, passing motorists can appreciate the work of Hahn and the City workers who are beautifying our roadways.

"Several years ago, Mayor Plusquellic issued a mandate that we improve the aesthetics and reduce the maintenance of our roadsides," says Hahn, a 28-year City employee. Since then, more than 200 varieties of trees, numerous shrubs and a wide assortment of flowers have been planted alongside miles of expressway, including stretches of I-77 and I-76.

Hahn, a registered landscape architect, explains that, along with enhancing the area's visual appearance, the plantings lower highway noise levels and reduce the cost and time of mowing the adjacent terrain.

With an eventual goal of landscaping about 50 miles of expressway, Hahn says, the project is about 40 percent complete. Last year, he oversaw the planting of 9,000 daffodil bulbs and 5,000 black-eyed Susans. "They should look nice when they blossom this spring," he notes. Saying that he's "having a lot of fun with the project," Hahn explains, "It's gratifying to drive by and see the work that's been accomplished. It's also pretty neat to know that motorists who notice the plantings can possibly incorporate some of these landscape ideas into their own yards." 

Everything Old Is New Again

A 20th-century pioneer gets a 21st-century makeover

By Mark Williamson

It's been looking kind of old-fashioned and shabby for a while now. Impatient drivers are quick to talk about the better design and greater convenience of its sleeker, more modern counterparts. In fact, it's become the Rodney Dangerfield of local roadways: These days, it just doesn't get any respect. But thanks to some much-needed attention, the Akron stretch of Route 8 is on its way to looking its very best.

State Route 8 is Akron's oldest expressway. Half a century ago, after the end of World War II, forward-thinking city leaders began to address the subject of a highway system that would link all parts of the city. The first link to be designed was the stretch of Route 8 extending from Cuyahoga Falls Avenue to East Exchange Street. Construction began in the early 1950s, and the "north leg" of Akron's expressway system was completed in 1955. As usual, Akron was ahead of its time: President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act one year later, instituting the interstate highway system for the rest of the country.



Many have asked why Route 8 was designed so poorly, with ramps that appear to be almost on top of each other. The truth is, highways evolve. When it was new, Route 8 was considered state-of-the-art. At that time, there was little precedent for designers to follow; they did the best they could with available knowledge. Nowadays, state and federal guidelines mandate such considerations as lane widths and distances between ramps. Fifty years ago, no such guidelines existed.

Now that the expressways have been around for half a century, engineers know a lot more about how to design them to meet future needs than they did when the concept was new. And don't forget that,

when Route 8 opened, only 20,000 vehicles used it each day. Nowadays, more than 120,000 vehicles travel this section of highway daily. No wonder Route 8 needs a face-lift!

So, what's going to happen during the next few years? The reconstruction of Route 8 within the city of Akron will center on the area stretching from the viaduct to the central interchange. In this one-and-a-half-mile section, three ramps will be eliminated entirely; the remaining eight ramps will be improved, and service roads will be constructed to run parallel with the highway. These service roads will provide access to the busy streets around Route 8.

When will the work be completed? If we're lucky and the weather holds out, we may see most roadwork completed by fall of 2004. The contractor has until mid-2005 to complete the entire project, which includes landscaping. That's fast: It took five years to rebuild I-76 in east Akron.

How will you be able to find out whether expressway lanes or ramps are closed? Watch for the changeable message signs stationed along highways leading to the project. Tune your car radio to AM 530 for current construction information. Go to the website (www.roadwise.org) and the hotline (866-ROADWISE) for detailed information. And remember, that the media in northeast Ohio will be providing constant updates.

From its inception, Route 8 has been one of the workhorses of Akron's highway system. When the necessary modernization is complete, it should continue to serve our community for years to come.



Construction Zone

City moves to counteract Sand Run Road slippage

Motorists are encountering their fair share of detours this spring, not only on the interstate highway system, but also on main thoroughfares in Akron. The City of Akron wants to keep motorists as safe as possible, so everything from minor pothole repairs to major road overhauls will be taking place.

If you travel on Akron's west side and are used to taking Sand Run Road from Sand Run Parkway to Smith Road, you've been making other plans since late last year. City engineers have been concerned about the gradual deterioration of this road; now, as a result of poor soil composition, a portion of it is actually falling into a ravine. In 1991, the City completed a \$750,000 reconstruction of this stretch of roadway; it included new storm sewers, water lines, concrete curbs and pavement. Twelve years later, the soil beneath it has begun to erode.

After studying options for long-term repairs to the slope, engineers have come up with a plan to create what is called a toe berm – actually locking soil into the ground to hold it in place. The grade of the slopes that abut the hill will be reduced and extended by 145 feet, making the embankments shallower. This solution will cost \$1,237,000, less than half the cost of a retaining wall, and will be virtually maintenance-free. It will also create a more natural and pleasing environment than a retaining wall. Construction is scheduled to begin by September 15, 2003.

To pay for the project, the City is applying for state monies to cover half the cost. The remaining expenses will be met with funds generated by the sale of vehicle license tags. A portion of fees paid by motorists for license plates and tags goes back to Ohio counties and is disbursed for road repair projects such as this. ©

History

Akron Paint & Varnish Endures & Thrives

By Dave Lieberth

Before Henry Ford imagined an automobile, before Harvey Firestone even thought about starting a tire company, and 20 years before Fred W. Albrecht opened his first Acme store, the Akron Paint & Varnish Company began a tradition that continues today.

The high-tech company, which sells products to the world from South Akron as APV Engineered Coatings, is celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2003. Only the *Akron Beacon Journal* can trace its years of continuous operation to roots going further back than those of APV.

In 1878, when horse-drawn buggies tied up at hitching posts along Howard Street, J. Martin Beck and E. George Kubler “commenced the manufacture of varnishes, japans, etc., of every variety and of superior quality” on North Bowery Street, as Samuel Lane observed in his 1892 book, *Fifty Years & Over of Akron and Summit County*.

These two German immigrants sold black enamel paint, made from a secret formula, with limited success – until the bicycle craze swept America in the 1890s. Then APV was deluged with orders for its paint. The first of what would be several deadly fires through the years interrupted the company’s business in 1894; nonetheless, APV was one of few Akron firms to survive the “panic” of the 1890s. The turn of the century brought a new market for APV’s brilliant and durable black enamel paint – the automobile.

Through good times and bad, Akron Paint & Varnish has been a resilient force in the Akron economy. In 1912, the manufacturing plant and offices moved to a new building – one of the first in the area to be constructed with poured concrete. Today, 80 employees work at the facility on Firestone Parkway. Reminders of the company’s 125-year history are displayed throughout the offices; in fact, some of the original mixing vats are still in use.

The company mixes some 12,000 different



Akron Paint & Varnish, known today as APV Engineered Coatings, has operated out of its building on Firestone Parkway since 1912.

chemicals to make a variety of coatings, including a patented adhesive that Goodyear uses for retreading tires, the non-stick coatings for ECKO baking pans, and the adhesive that keeps the gas envelopes in place on the Goodyear blimp. APV even makes specialty coatings that cattle ranchers paint on animals, in stripes that will tell them when a cow is ready to mate.

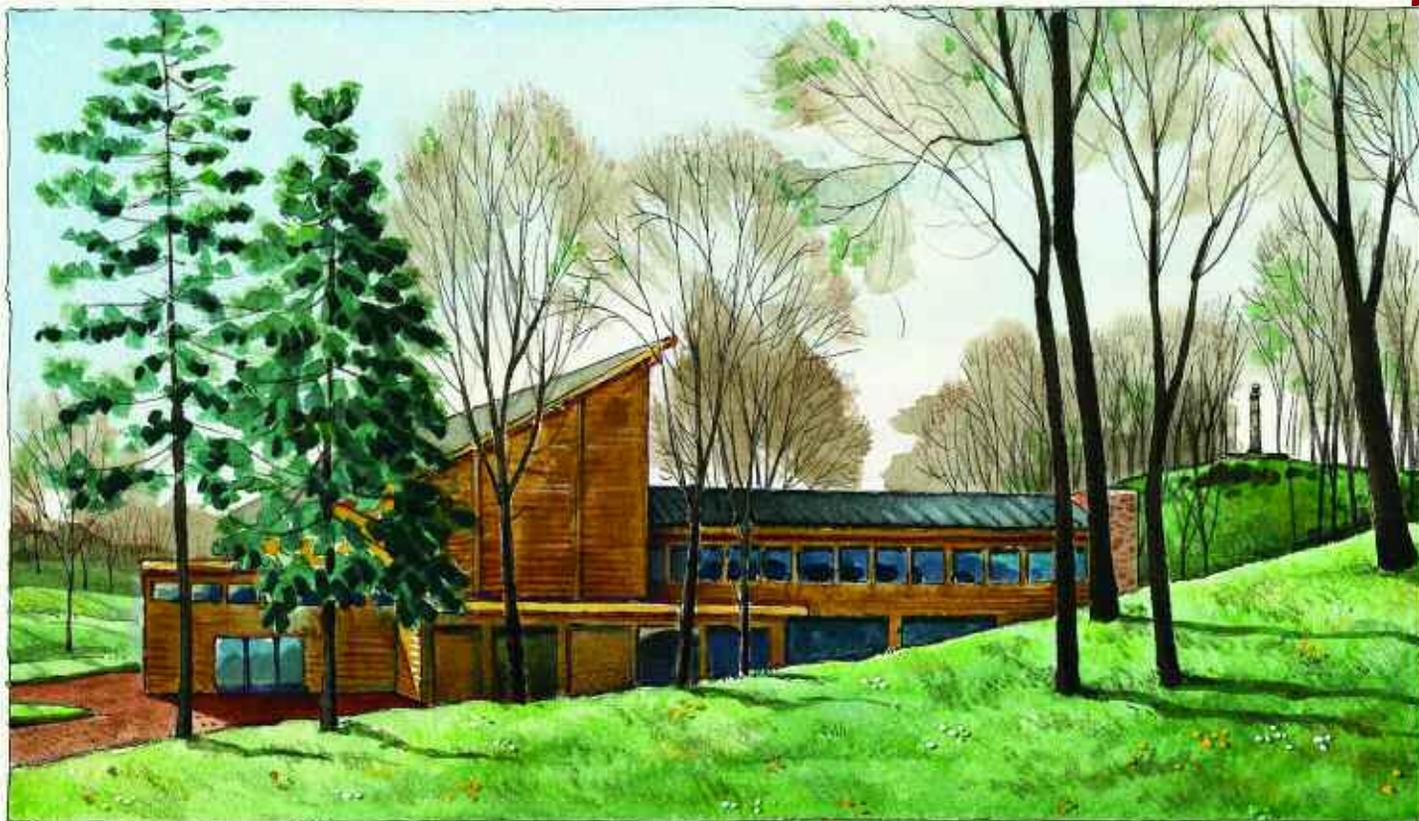
In 1982, the company was near bankruptcy, but crisis looked like opportunity to David Venarge, a salesman of APV products from 1967 to 1976. The first evidence of his success came in 1985, when Venarge, who ultimately became APV’s president and CEO, was named Akron’s Small Business Person of the year.

Today, APV boasts sales in excess of \$15 million and is a high-tech engineering company that produces sophisticated coatings, custom-created by APV scientists. With its ISO 9001 certification, APV is sought out by automakers to provide coatings that will last on engine components for up to 200,000 miles of highway use.

In 2001, the company opened the most modern chemical-mixing facility of its type anywhere, focusing on safety as it gets ready for future growth. Venarge says APV plans to host a community open house to celebrate its 125th anniversary in August. ©



J. MARTIN BECK.



It Is All Happening at the Zoo

By Russ Musarra / Illustration by Chuck Ayers

The cloudless sky was hurt-your-eyes blue as we trudged across the parking lot for a closer look at the Akron Zoo's new Welcome Center. Workers were readying the sprawling two-story timber structure for the administrative staff, which began moving in March 1, and for the April 16 grand opening.

Artist Ayers and I knew little about the building. That would come later, when I spoke to zoo officials. For the moment, we were interested in finding the right vantage point for Ayers' illustration. We were reminded of our 1990 visit, when we watched the attention of a group of children shift from a noisy black-billed trumpeter swan to the sky, where the Goodyear blimp slowly droned into view. There was no blimp this time, but jet contrails streaked the sky, and a couple of hawks soared above as we walked along the construction fence.

Ayers found his illustration at the north end of the construction site. Looking south and west, we could see the new zoo building

Zoobilation, celebrating the zoo's 50th anniversary, kicks off on June 15. On August 9, the \$1.2 million Penguin Exhibit opens.

and beyond it the John Brown memorial, which stands on a knoll within a fence to protect it from vandals. The January issue of *Akron City* magazine informed us that a committee is studying whether to keep the memorial where it is or give it a new home within the neighborhood. Whether it goes or stays, Ayers decided to zero in on the monument while it was visible through the still-bare trees.

A conversation with David Barnhardt, the zoo's public relations chief, and Planning Director Donn Angus revealed how much

the old Simon and Garfunkel lyric "It's all happening at the zoo" fits the situation at the Akron facility. Construction of the \$4.2 million Welcome Center began in December 2001. Reminiscent of WPA-era park buildings, it has an atrium, 24 rooms, a gift shop and guest services facilities. Its entrance will be the public entrance to the zoo.

Barnhardt and Angus told us to mark two dates on our calendars. Zoobilation, celebrating the zoo's 50th anniversary, kicks off on June 15. And on August 9, the \$1.2 million Penguin Exhibit opens, featuring 40 birds – 20 of them new – in a 35,000-gallon tank within 50 yards of the Welcome Center. Also on that date, the zoo's new main entrance drive off Euclid Avenue will open. Ayers noted that his son, Wes, turns 10 on August 9, so I wouldn't be surprised if a trip to the zoo were on his agenda.

The zoo is at 500 Edgewood Avenue. Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Admission is \$4, parking \$1. Call 330-375-2550 for details. 

Business



In 1978, the Thera-Band® brand name was first introduced by Akron's Hygienic Corporation in the Chapel Hill neighborhood and has since gained an international reputation with physical therapists and sports trainers for quality and effectiveness. It is the only line of elastic resistance exercise products endorsed for the past eight years by the American Physical Therapy Association. Thera-Band® celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. ©

City Council



Calls to Akron City Council are often answered by the legislative body's energetic staff on the third floor at City Hall. When you call Council offices at 330-375-2256, you may be greeted by Deputy Clerk Cheri Racano (seated), Council Aides Barbe Beaty (left) or Connie Genevish (center). The Clerk of Council is John Valle (right, standing). John is a former councilman for Ward One (1984-1989). He also served as Councilman-at-Large (1989-2001). ©

Money for New Schools Hinges on Income Tax Approval

Akron voters are being asked to approve an increase in the city income tax on May 6 and create a special fund to rebuild Akron's public schools.

If approved, Akron's income tax would increase by one quarter of 1 percent to a total of 2.25 percent. The tax will be collected for 30 years and will generate most of the \$270 million that is needed to trigger a once-in-a-lifetime grant of \$409 million from Ohio's tobacco-settlement funds. The nearly \$700 million generated by the package will be used only for permanent improvements to Akron Public Schools.

"We have one last chance," says Mayor Don Plusquellic, "to get our share of the state tobacco-settlement funds that have been set aside for this purpose. With the State of Ohio's budget crisis, this money will never come our way again." The deadline for Akron to raise the local match is June 30. Already, every other major Ohio city has raised the local match, through property tax increases, and Akron remains the only major Ohio city without the necessary local funds.

"Akron voters approved a nine-mil property tax increase for operations just two years ago," says City Council President Marco Sommerville. "We heard from every senior citizen that, when it comes to more property taxes, enough is enough."

A countywide sales tax, proposed last November by Mayor Plusquellic and Summit County Executive Jim McCarthy, would have accomplished the goal of raising the local funds. But while Akron voters approved it, most suburban voters turned it down – even though sales-tax revenues would have been shared on a per-pupil basis by every one of Summit County's 17 districts.

"There's still a chance that a sales tax will

be back on the ballot," Council Finance Chairman John Conti says. "If a sales tax does pass in the future, then the legislation we've approved requires us to collect only so much of the income tax that a sales tax would not provide."

The income tax proposal – city money dedicated to school construction – is unique to Ohio, but not in other parts of the nation, where "Community Learning Centers," as they are called, are already in place. The City and the Akron Public Schools would jointly own and operate the new buildings under an agreement. Community Learning Centers would be schools by day, but at night and in the summers would be used by the

City for recreation, entertainment, civic meetings and especially after-school programs.

"We're talking about serving the very same families after the school day is over," says Mayor Plusquellic. "We don't want to be in teachers' classrooms; that's school business, and run solely by the

school board. But we do want to be in the gymnasiums, swimming pools, cafeterias and computer labs, so that the whole neighborhood gets to use the school buildings year-round."

If adopted at the May 6 special election, the one-quarter-of-one-percent tax would be collected *only* on earned wages and taxable fringe benefits. Income that will NOT be taxed includes retirement income, Social Security, interest and dividends, unemployment and worker's compensation, alimony and other unearned income.

Workers who have jobs in Akron, but don't live in the city, also pay the increased tax. Mayor Plusquellic has promised that the new Community Learning Centers will be open to every family that either lives or works in Akron. ©

If adopted at the May 6 special election, the one-quarter-of-one-percent tax would be collected *only* on earned wages and taxable fringe benefits.



The Town Crier

by Russ Musarra

Akron's NYC Connection

Freelance writer **BETTY O'NEILL-RODERICK** misses few parties around northeast Ohio, so it's no surprise she jumped at the chance to be aboard Air Tran Airways' inaugural flight to the Big Apple March 4. Her son, **DAVID RODERICK**, is an analyst for Scientific Laboratories in Manhattan.

A Silver Celebration

Before flying off to New York, Betty showed me her pictures from the soiree **ELLEN OTTO** and **JOEL WOLFGANG** threw February 24 to applaud **PRESCOTT GRIFFITH** for his 25 years as owner and executive producer of the Carousel Dinner Theatre. They had plenty of help conducting a roast that was more of a toast to Griffith's time at the helm of the good ship Carousel. **MARY ANN JACKSON** flew in from Naples, Florida, to participate. Griffith's sister, **SUZY SHIERHOLZ**, spoke on behalf of the family, as did his aunt, **ESTHER INTERMILL**.

Others singing Griffith's praises included **DOROTHY JACKSON**, Akron Deputy Mayor for Intergovernmental Relations, Akron tourism guru **LARRY PENTECOST**, former Carousel group-sales rep **VIRGINIA KANCLER**, director **JOEY PATTON**, producer **KAREN STARR** and Carousel's new owners, **JOSEPH PALMER** and **DAVID SLAGHT**, who ignored the no-gifts admonition to present the man of the hour a cooking-school trip to Tuscany. Griffith promised to be around for at least the next four years – the term of his consulting agreement with the theater.



Romanoski Heads League

GEORGE ROMANOSKI, Akron Deputy Mayor for public safety, has been elected president of the Ohio Municipal League. Trustees of the league, representing 798 cities and villages, met in Worthington, Ohio, in December.

Romanoski, a member of Akron Mayor

DON PLUSQUELLIC's cabinet since 1991, was first vice president last year.

He began his career with the City of Akron in 1962 and progressed through the ranks to become Akron's 13th fire chief in 1988.

Employees of the Month



JOHN S. FALASCA, **BRIAN HARDING**, **KIM HERRON**, and **RUDY DONATELLI** gathered for a group photo at the Akron Municipal Building recently to commemorate their mutual distinction as employees of the month.

Herron, January's honoree, is an account clerk II in the Department of Finance's purchasing division, where she's the first to greet visitors with a smile. She began her career with the City in June 1987. She moved into her current assignment in November 1991, where she prepares purchase orders for the Board of Control, disburses petty cash and handles accident reports. She and husband **GREG** have three children, **JEREMY**, **AMANDA** and **KAYLA**.

Harding, February's employee of the month, is a detective sergeant in the Akron Police Department's juvenile division. He joined the department in August 1995, a year after he graduated from the University of Akron with a bachelor's degree in Technical Education and a minor in Criminal Justice. He supervises the Missing Persons Unit and detectives in the Child Abuse Unit. Harding helped bring the Amber Alert System to the

State of Ohio. He is married and the father of a son and daughter.

March honoree Donatelli is supervisor of the city's Patterson Park Recreation Center, where he oversees activities of residents of all ages, from three-year-olds in the Tiny Tots program to participants in activities for senior citizens. This summer marks Donatelli's 18th year on the Akron Recreation Bureau staff. He is one of 40 members of his family to graduate from North High School, where he played baseball. He's single and lives on North Hill, where the first Donatellis settled in 1915.

Falasca, the employee of the month for December 2002, is a buyer in the Department of Finance's purchasing division. He began his career with the City of Akron in December 1990, a year after he graduated from the University of Akron. Falasca's avocations are gardening, landscaping, wine-making, Italian cooking and music. He plays the accordion and keyboards, and sings in the Viva Italia Band. He also is active in the Carovillese Club, where he has been nominated for vice president.

Beautiful News



The City of Akron and Keep Akron Beautiful placed second among cities of 100,001 to 300,000 residents in the annual America in Bloom national beautification competition. Akron was recognized for its flowerscapes and adopt-a-beds program sponsored by Keep Akron Beautiful, the restored Alexander Park, Mud Run Golf Course and the city's vegetative abatement landscapes used to beautify and control noise on our highway system. Kalamazoo County, Mich., edged Akron from first place by just three votes.



Akron City

Glory Days

“Glory Days,” captures the spirit of the Akron Air Show, which this year will be held at the Fulton Airport, June 20-22, celebrating A Century of Flight. Call 330-896-6332 for information.

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